



Photo by Rick McComb

## Collaboration. Collegiality. Continuous improvement.

These qualities have characterized the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) from the start. When the time came to work on a new testing contract, the Kentucky Board of Education had an opportunity to further enhance Kentucky's internationally pre-eminent system of assessment and accountability.

Naturally, we turned again to our key stakeholders for help. And, especially, we turned to you — our public school educators. We knew you had ideas for improvement. We asked you what they were and how to make them happen.

Every public school educator in Kentucky has had an opportunity to help enhance the Core

Content for Assessment, the writing portfolio, the way the tests are designed — even the way they are administered. Literally thousands of Kentucky teachers and administrators have taken part in this process. We've had thoughtful legislative guidance and lots of help from a panel of the nation's top testing experts.

We have come so far in Kentucky. Every measure of educational attainment shows it.

And now, thanks to you, these new CATS enhancements, which take effect in spring 2007, will improve teaching and learning even more and take us to the next level.

**See Pages 6 and 7 to find out how your concerns are being addressed.**

## Highly Skilled Educators are helping schools achieve

By Faun S. Fishback  
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In Kentucky's lowest-performing schools, they're among the first to arrive and the last to leave. They attend school committee meetings. They provide professional development to staff.

They're regulars at school based decision making council meetings. They model

best practices in classroom instruction. They counsel administrators and teachers on school improvement strategies. In their spare time, they participate in Scholastic Audits and Reviews.

They still find time to attend professional development sessions that will help them increase their abilities to help schools improve. And some spend their

"down" time completing an alternative certification program for future administrative positions.

"They" are Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educators. Since 1994, more than 300 educators have been selected and trained to help improve teaching and learning in the schools identified through state assessments as needing assistance in

reaching state accountability goals.

This school year, 48 Highly Skilled Educators will be working in Kentucky schools. Full-time Highly Skilled Educators will be assigned to each Level 3 (lowest-performing) school. Highly Skilled Educators also will offer assistance to Level 1 and Level 2 schools to help improve instruction and student achievement.

The 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act established the Kentucky Distinguished Educators Program. Distinguished Educators began working in schools in 1994. In 1998, state legislators reconfigured the school assistance program and established the Highly Skilled Educators Program that serves assistance-level schools today.

**Recognized success**  
The Highly Skilled Educators Program,  
See **HIGHLY** on Page 9

## Survey Says — Technology!

KTLC responses show educators' greatest priorities

The annual Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC) is intended to serve as a high-quality professional development experience that will provide teachers, principals and other administrators with the tools they need to increase student achievement.

To ensure that KTLC provides meaningful and useful learning opportunities, the Kentucky Department of Education surveyed the state's educators earlier this year to ask how KTLC can best meet their needs.

Overwhelmingly, educators said they want more "instructional technology" — hands-on workshops and sessions that focus on best practices, ideas and techniques to integrate technology throughout the curriculum.

"We're listening to what our educators are saying about KTLC, and we are using their responses to fine-tune and improve the conference for 2006," said Thelma Whiteside, the conference coordinator.

"That's why this survey was so important."

Whiteside and department staff have analyzed the survey responses and are using them to plan the 2006 conference.

"The sessions and workshops at KTLC will continue to cover the broad range of topics and issues that have an impact on teaching and learning," she said. "They should be practical and interesting. We want examples of best practices from our schools, in all areas and particularly in the area of instructional technology. We'd like to invite successful educators — including those who are effectively using technology as an instructional tool — to share their strategies with other educators."

If you'd like to share your knowledge and experience with your peers at KTLC '06, visit the conference Web site at [www.kentuckytlc.org](http://www.kentuckytlc.org) to submit your presentation proposal or contact Thelma Whiteside at (800) 533-5372 or [twhiteside@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:twhiteside@kde.state.ky.us).

## Students voice ideas on high school to state board

By Cathy Lindsey  
clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

North Oldham County High School graduates Andrew McCormick and Meredith Geers told the Kentucky Board of Education at its June meeting that Kentucky high school students have specific ideas on how to improve the high school experience. The two students gathered the information during meetings with student focus groups throughout the state.

As part of the state board's refocusing secondary education initiative, high school students like McCormick and Geers met with their peers to find out how students think Kentucky high schools can be improved. McCormick and Geers said students suggested several changes that would encourage students to stay in school and achieve at high levels, including:

- Students would benefit if the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System

See **STUDENTS** on Page 10

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# Bulletin Board



## Conferences

### KASC

The Kentucky Association of School Councils conference, Sept. 12-13 in Louisville, will allow new and experienced council members to fulfill their training requirements.

[www.kasc.net/conference.htm](http://www.kasc.net/conference.htm)

### History Teachers Association

The Kentucky Association of Teachers of History will host its 30th annual conference Oct. 1 in Frankfort. This year's theme is "Thanks for the Memories: Examining Historical Perception." Registration deadline is Sept. 21.

[www.kyhistoryteachers.org](http://www.kyhistoryteachers.org)

### Safe schools

The 11th annual "Safe Schools — Successful Students" conference will be Sept. 19-20 in Louisville.

[www.kysafeschools.org/clear/conference/cssconf05.html](http://www.kysafeschools.org/clear/conference/cssconf05.html)

### Kentucky Reading Association

The 2005 Kentucky Reading Association conference is set for Sept. 23-24 in Louisville. The theme for the conference is "Shaping Literacy. Shaping Lives."

[www.kyreading.org/2005%20conference.htm](http://www.kyreading.org/2005%20conference.htm)

### Kids Are Worth It!®

The 9th annual Kids Are Worth It!® conference is scheduled for Aug. 31-Sept. 2 in Lexington. Information and registration forms are available on the Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky Web site.

[www.pcaky.org](http://www.pcaky.org)

### Environmental Education

The Kentucky Association for Environmental Education conference is scheduled for Sept. 9-11 in Prestonsburg. The theme is "Everything Under the Sun."

[www.kaee.org/conference.htm](http://www.kaee.org/conference.htm)

### Social Studies Council

The Kentucky Council for the Social Studies conference is set for Sept. 21-22 in Louisville.

Contact: Robin Chandler, (502) 564-2106, [rchandle@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:rchandle@kde.state.ky.us).

[www.kcss.org](http://www.kcss.org)

### Library media specialists

The Kentucky School Media Association and the Kentucky Library Association will hold their joint conference Sept. 14-17 in Louisville.

[www.kysma.org](http://www.kysma.org)

## Events

### Constitution taught on Sept. 17

Every school and college that receives federal funding is required to teach about the Constitution on Sept. 17, the day the document was adopted in 1787. Classroom materials are available on the Internet.

[www.archives.gov/national\\_archives\\_experience/charters/constitution.html](http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters/constitution.html)

### Thoroughbred Center

The Thoroughbred Center in Lexington announces its next performance for school groups: "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." Performance dates are Oct. 27 and 28 at 10 a.m. and noon; tickets are \$4.50.

Contact: Stacy Thurman, (859) 293-1853, [sthurman@thethoroughbredcenter.com](mailto:sthurman@thethoroughbredcenter.com)

[www.TheThoroughbredCenter.com/theatre](http://www.TheThoroughbredCenter.com/theatre)

## Resources

### Loan forgiveness for more teachers

More teachers in Kentucky will be able to save on their student loans by applying for Best in Class benefits from The Student Loan People.

Foreign language teachers and teachers who are members of a minority group are now eligible for up to 20 percent forgiveness of their student loan principal if they have their loans through The Student Loan People, the state's only public, nonprofit student loan provider.

Check the Web site to find out other teacher groups eligible for principal or interest forgiveness.

[www.studentloanpeople.com](http://www.studentloanpeople.com)

### American music grants

The National Music Foundation offers grants of up to \$1,000 to P-12 teachers who create lesson plans using American music. Applications must be received by Sept. 19.

[www.usamusic.org/submit\\_lesson.html](http://www.usamusic.org/submit_lesson.html)

### Kids in Need Foundation grants

Kids in Need Teacher Grants are offered to any certified P-12 teacher. Grants range from \$100 to \$500 for innovative classroom projects. Applications accepted until Sept. 30.

[www.shopa.org/shopa\\_foundation/teacher\\_programs.php](http://www.shopa.org/shopa_foundation/teacher_programs.php)

### Arts inclusion awards

The VSA arts of Kentucky (Very Special Arts) inclusion award application may be obtained and completed online. Schools across Kentucky may apply online to receive \$1,000 awards for arts projects that include students of all abilities. Up to 50 awards are given each year to schools across the state. The awards allow classroom teachers and artists to work together to plan inclusionary arts projects for all students. Applications must be postmarked by Oct. 12.

[www.vsartsky.org/programs/artsInclusion.php](http://www.vsartsky.org/programs/artsInclusion.php)

### Online physics courses for teachers

Elementary and middle school teachers can register for courses on light, temperature and heat, electricity and magnetism, and force, motion and energy for graduate credit or professional development credit. The science courses emphasize hands-on activities for classroom use. For further description and previews, visit [www.hovphysics.com](http://www.hovphysics.com).

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr [jbarr@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jbarr@kde.state.ky.us)



# Commissioner's Comments

## Allen County illustrates ways public school districts can creatively fund instructional technology

By Gene Wilhoit  
gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us

Last spring, I had the opportunity to visit the newly constructed Allen County Intermediate Center. Students and teachers had only been in the facility about three months, but an excitement for learning already permeated the school.

As I toured the building with Superintendent Larry Williams, Principal Allen White and Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) Ambassadors, I was struck by how this district has designed and equipped the school to encourage student-directed learning. Teachers are using technology as never before to support their instruction.

As Library Media Specialist Joan Brown told a member of our staff, "Our teachers are teaching the same subjects, but using technology to reinforce student learning." Brown maintains the school retrieval system of maps, charts, Internet resources, digitized video clips and documentaries that teachers can request to support their classroom lessons.

Each of the 28 classrooms is equipped with an "active board." Teachers can access and display information from the library and the Internet — as well as computer programs, notes and flip charts — on the boards.

The active boards eliminated the need for purchasing TV monitors and projection screens for each classroom. Anything teachers retrieve from the library or their computers can be viewed by the class on the active board.

Teachers also can use the boards to conduct on-time class assessments. They can post questions on an active board with multiple-choice answers, and students use a handheld control to record their individual answers. Teachers can get a calculation from this second-generation SMART Board that shows the number of correct and incorrect responses, and produce charts or graphs that show how many students understand the content.

Using this information, teachers can reteach misunderstood concepts immediately. Principal White says teachers are more informed about their students' learning, and it's making a positive difference in student achievement.

The fourth- and fifth-graders I talked with and saw working in the classrooms were definitely in charge of their learning. They have the opportunity to use tools at the intermediate center that are state-of-the-art.

Technology is motivating them to focus on what they are learning. Teachers say that all their students participate more in class and that students are more receptive to learning because of the technology.



Photo by Rick McComb

### *Talking through a problem*

Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit listens as Barbara Perkins and classmate James Petty work to solve a mathematics problem during class at Northern Middle School (Pulaski County). The commissioner visited Northern Middle, F.T. Burns Middle School (Davies County) and Olmstead School (Logan County) last spring to congratulate the faculties and students on being named 2005 Kentucky Schools to Watch.

Principal White said he has observed more participation by students during classroom instruction at the new building. "They want to be involved. . . It is great to see excitement on their faces as they are making a presentation of content learned at the application level using this technology," he said.

In most Kentucky schools, students don't have access to such cutting-edge technology. As many of you are all too aware, technology funding in the state has dropped considerably over the past six years.

While Kentucky once was a national leader in education technology, it is now listed as "one of the least-up-to-date," in the "Technology Counts" report published last May by the national education magazine *Education Week*.

The report shows that Kentucky invested early in education technology. However, the recent, deep funding cuts are making it harder and harder for our schools to replace obsolete hardware and software.

"Technology Counts" acknowledges that Kentucky is expert at education technology. We are ranked second in the nation by the report in capacity to use whatever technology we have and fifth in the nation on high-quality use by teachers and students of the technology we have.

At the same time, the report finds Kentucky lacking in terms of student access to actual technology. We fell to 27th in the nation in that category!

This means our students are close to losing the competitive advantage they've enjoyed because of the initial investment in technology that came with education reform. Instead of building on our firm education technology foundation, our schools' ability to upgrade hardware and software has eroded over the past six years. Technology is underfunded in our schools.

I'm telling you about the Allen County Intermediate Center to point out the fact that Kentucky schools and districts must look for ways to leverage existing money sources for technology. The Allen County center is one of a handful of Kentucky schools under construction or being renovated that are using restricted construction funds to purchase fixed technology equipment like the active boards instead of TV monitors for classrooms, or school-wide video retrieval systems that can be installed as part of the construction work.

With deliberate planning, Allen County has provided state-of-the-art instructional technology at very affordable costs. It's something we feel other schools and districts can and should replicate.

I encourage you to visit the Allen County Intermediate Center and let me know if you agree that this is a model we need to use for 21st century schools in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Board of Education and I have made increased technology funding a priority for the next biennial budget. The state owes you greater support.

Likewise, schools must look closely at existing funding to help replace obsolete hardware and software to keep our students competitive in the global economy. Schools and districts must look closely at what can be purchased through SEEK funds (Support Education Excellence in Kentucky), textbook funds, professional development funds, special education funds, available corporate funds and local taxes.

Schools and districts shouldn't forget the money available through the federal E-rate program, the No Child Left Behind EdTech grants and federal funds that are not technology-specific. Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) funds and offers of assistance from the Kentucky Department of Education also must be utilized.

Our local officials and business leaders need to be aware how continued underfunding of technology in Kentucky schools will impact public education's ability to produce students who are prepared for 21st century jobs. I encourage each of you to talk with leaders in your community and your legislators to let them know technology funding is among the top priorities for your schools and districts. It is certainly a priority with the Department of Education!

### **Mandate for healthier students**

On another note, Kentucky schools open this year with a new legislative mandate to make sure students will learn more about improving their health and becoming physically fit. Kentucky teachers and leaders of community programs can find resources and models of best practices to integrate physical activity in their classes on the Department of Education's Web site.

Content area consultants in the department have identified and reviewed programs and lessons that will help schools integrate nutrition education and physical activity across the curriculum. Those "Physical Activity and Nutrition Integration Resources" provide curriculum ideas aligned to Kentucky's core content standards that will help students build healthy habits.

To look over the resources, go to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and enter "physical" in the keyword/search box in the top right-hand corner of the page. Click on "Physical Activity and Nutrition Integration Resources" to learn how to promote good health and physical activity in mathematics, science, social studies and language arts classes at all levels.

(If you have comments about this column, contact the commissioner at [gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us).)



# World language teachers participate in Improving Educator Quality project

Twenty-eight Kentucky P-12 French, German and Spanish teachers are participating in a 15-month professional development project organized by the Department of Modern Languages at Western Kentucky University (WKU). The project, “Improving Student World Language Performance: Using Assessment as the Guiding Force in Standards-Based Instruction,” is funded by a U.S. Department of Education Improving Educator Quality grant.

This project proposes to improve P-12 world language instruction in Kentucky by providing a variety of professional development activities that address specific areas:

- the teachers’ own target language proficiency
- their familiarity with the culture of the target language
- the design and delivery of curriculum that builds student proficiency
- the use of self-assessment/reflective learning tools
- connections with international and community partners

to provide students with meaningful language interaction opportunities

- the expansion of the project’s insights and benefits to other Kentucky P-12 teachers through dissemination activities

Grant activities also will help build networks for collaboration between students and their teachers and the contemporary global society.

Participants already have attended two day-long workshops and an intensive immersion seminar, either on the WKU campus or in Germany, France or Mexico. During the workshops, teachers learned to use a new world language assessment tool, LinguaFolio Kentucky, and to create standards-based units of study.

Each world language teacher is working with a mentor teacher and with the postsecondary facilitators of the summer seminars, both online and in face-to-face meetings and class visitations. Jacques Van Houten, Kentucky Department of Education world language and international education consultant, is a collabora-

tor in the project.

In September, all participants will make presentations at the Kentucky World Language Association meeting. They also will present their units of study at a workshop on the WKU campus in spring 2006. Several participants will be featured at the spring conference on teaching sponsored by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

The professional development project ends in June 2006 with an online course on teaching world languages with technology. Participants also can receive graduate-level credit for course work associated with the project’s activities.

For more information about the “Improving Student World Language Performance” project, contact Linda S. Pickle, grant director and head of the Department of Modern Languages at WKU, by e-mail at [linda.pickle@wku.edu](mailto:linda.pickle@wku.edu) or phone at (270) 745-2401.

# ‘Tails of the Bluegrass’ is family literacy project

The first installment of “Tails of the Bluegrass,” a 10-chapter serial written by Kentucky author Leigh Ann Florence, will begin appearing in Kentucky newspapers the week of Sept. 12. The story is written for P-5 elementary students and can be used in the classroom as well as shared at home by students and their families.

Florence is author of the “Woody the Kentucky Weiner” stories. Each chapter of “Tails of the Bluegrass” will take readers around Kentucky as Woody, the wiener dog, and his family visit and learn about the many places of interest in Kentucky counties.

Teachers can find online learning activities for each chapter, aligned with Kentucky Academic Expectations, at [www.kypress.com](http://www.kypress.com) once the story begins. In addition, the author and Woody plan to travel throughout Kentucky to meet with students, teachers and parents while the story is appearing in papers. Local newspapers will provide more details of the tour schedule.

This children’s story is the fourth family literacy project, “Rocking Readin’ Revolution,” sponsored by the Kentucky Press Association, the Kentucky Network for Newspaper in Education and the LG&E Energy/KU Foundation. Teachers can contact their local newspapers now to find out how to get the weekly newspaper story for their students.

Teachers also can request free scrapbooks for students to use to collect each chapter of the story. Scrapbooks are available courtesy of the sponsors and Kentucky newspapers.

Last school year, more than 723,000 Kentucky readers enjoyed the weekly travels found in “Brain Freeze” by author Bob Rouse. Kentucky’s First Lady Glenna Fletcher helped kick off the project in January by reading the first chapter to students in several schools.

For more information, contact Kriss Johnson, Kentucky Newspaper in Education chair, at [kjohnson@kypress.com](mailto:kjohnson@kypress.com).

# Center for School Safety offers suicide prevention training

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 15-24. The Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services and the Kentucky Center for School Safety want to help those who work closely with young people learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to get an at-risk person the help he or she needs.

QPR, which stands for “Question, Persuade and Refer,” is a nationally recognized program that has helped prevent suicide among people of all ages. In as little as 90 minutes, non-mental health professionals can learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide and learn how to apply the program’s three life-saving steps.

QPR training is available to faculty, certified staff and student groups throughout the state as part of the center’s “On Demand” trainings. To learn more about the variety of training and technical assistance available from the center, go to [www.kysafeschools.org](http://www.kysafeschools.org) on the Internet.

Presented by a certified QPR instructor, each training session



Photo by Rick McComb

## A larger view of the world

Teena Shaver, an instructional assistant at Chenoweth Elementary (Jefferson County), helps Tyri Reed and Austin Leslie find the Middle East on a world globe located on the school campus. The artwork, fabricated by Jim Vanderhaar and presented to the school through a grant, serves both aesthetic and practical purposes for students, faculty and the community.

includes information on:

- suicide nationally and in Kentucky
- common myths and facts associated with suicide
- warning signs of suicide
- tips for asking questions
- methods for persuading suicidal individuals to get help
- ways of referring at-risk people to local resources

There also will be time for questions and answers.

Each attendee receives a QPR booklet and card with information on suicide prevention, as well as resource information for treatment providers and support groups within their commu-

nity. The Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services and the Kentucky Center for School Safety pay the trainer’s fees for each session. Schools pay only the cost of participant materials.

For more information on QPR training or to schedule a training session, contact Jason Padgett with the Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services at (502) 564-7610 or Doris Settles, Kentucky Center for School Safety, toll free at (877) 805-4277 or e-mail [doris.settles@uky.edu](mailto:doris.settles@uky.edu). For more information about QPR, visit [www.qprinstitute.com](http://www.qprinstitute.com).



## Talk to Us!

Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

**E-mail:** [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us)

**Phone:** (502) 564-3421 or  
(800) 533-5372  
(toll free in Kentucky)

**Fax:** (502) 564-6470

**Write:** Kentucky Teacher  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



## Changed KTIP evaluation will require teacher work sample

For 20 years, the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) has been providing feedback and guidance to new teachers. During that time, the KTIP evaluation of first-year teachers has relied on the act of teaching, documentation of classroom observations and a portfolio or “scrapbook.”

What has not been observed has been the relationship of teaching practice to student academic success. So, over the next three years, the KTIP portfolio is being overhauled to do just that.

The Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) proposes to replace the KTIP portfolio with a Teacher Work Sample (TWS) beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. The new requirement will help measure teacher effectiveness via classroom instruction and the learning gains of students.

The EPSB sought and was awarded a Federal Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant to focus on using data to analyze student performance, identify curricular gaps and target instructional practices that improve student learning.

This has become an important goal in the face of increasing accountability at the federal and state levels.

The TWS responds to the pressures of accountability through its emphasis on the role and importance of data about students and their learning, and the links between instructional practice of teachers and improved student learning.

The TWS includes a performance assessment in which the intern designs an instructional

unit covering two to four weeks of instruction. The unit should include a plan for the assessment of student learning both pre- and post-instruction, analysis of the impact of instruction on student learning and reflection on the success of the instructional unit.

It also includes classroom observation and a professional profile in which the intern demonstrates collaboration, leadership and professional growth.

The TWS places a high priority on:

- knowledge and skill in assessment
- capacity to align assessment with desired learning outcomes
- capacity to use assessment information to guide instruction and provide helpful feedback to students on their progress in learning.

Last school year, 100 interns in the KTIP Pilot Project produced the first TWSs, which were scored and benchmarked for reliability this summer.

After some modifications to the directions and the rubrics, 180 Pilot Project Interns and 400 intern volunteers coordinated through the eight state universities will produce TWSs during the 2005-2006 school year rather than regular KTIP portfolios. Committees and interns using the TWS during the 2005-2006 school year will receive training and a \$250 stipend.

For more information about the TWS or how a district can be part of the 400-volunteer cohort during the 2005-2006 school year, contact Dee Jones at (502) 564-4606 or find your regional KTIP coordinator online at [www.kyepsb.net/internships/universitylist.asp](http://www.kyepsb.net/internships/universitylist.asp).

### For P-16 educators

## Leavey Award recognizes economics teaching

Kentucky P-16 educators can be nominated for the Leavey Award for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education, sponsored by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. The award, given each year, recognizes outstanding educators who are inspiring the next generation of business leaders through innovative education programs.

Teresa Moore, a teacher at Stonewall Elementary in Fayette County, was one of 15 educators from across the country to receive a 2005 Leavey Award and a \$7,500 cash award. Her win-

ning entry, “From the Classroom to the Board Room — Entrepreneurs Emerge” engages her fifth-grade students in an ongoing curriculum of economic and entrepreneurship principles. Students participate in classroom businesses. They interview community and student entrepreneurs before developing their own business plans for businesses they operate during an Entrepreneur Fair.

The Leavey Award program is open to full-time teachers who have developed and implemented an innovative program that helps

students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the American private enterprise system. A portfolio that contains details about the program, its results and its relevance to private enterprise must accompany the nomination form. Nomination deadline for the 2006 awards program is Oct. 1.

For more information and to download a nomination form, go to [www.ffvf.org/leavey\\_info.asp](http://www.ffvf.org/leavey_info.asp). Questions may be directed to the Awards Department toll free at (800) 896-5488 or by e-mail at [awards@ffvf.org](mailto:awards@ffvf.org).



Photos by Rick McComb

### A great safety adventure

Students at Blue Lick Elementary (Jefferson County) line up to begin their “Great Safety Adventure” to spot and identify common household dangers to children. Upper left, Safety Ranger Brandon Deming warns students about the hazards posed by improperly stored medicines, cleaning products and electrical appliances in the bathroom. The 1,000 square-foot exhibit is sponsored by the Home Safety Council and Lowe’s Home Improvement Warehouse.

## People to People Program offers travel and cultural experiences

As Pat Bland, a teacher at Painted Stone Elementary in Shelby County, discovered four years ago, foreign travel as a leader of a People to People delegation can be an extremely rewarding experience.

“I find this to be a great boost after a school year,” said Bland, Kentucky area director for the People to People student program. “You have a lot of freedom to bring your own personality into the curriculum, and you see the children perform based on

what you’ve taught them.”

The People to People Ambassador Program was founded by President Dwight Eisenhower 50 years ago in an attempt to bring people of the world together one citizen at a time. The student program takes more than 30,000 fifth- through 12th-grade students to locales around the world every summer. Teachers, administrators and coaches can lead student groups in a variety of interest areas.

A rigorous curriculum guides the students through the history and culture of the area they will visit. They learn more about citizens of other nations through educational meetings and home stays during their trips.

“Being able to stand in the very spot that history took place rather than reading about it or seeing it on TV really solidifies in the minds of the students and teachers what took place and the impact it had,” said Program Director Jeff Aden. “Our leaders — your teachers — return energized with a country topic teachers can focus on for the year.”

The summer adventures revitalize teachers who participate. “We’re exploring cultures with

our students. We all learn about the political, cultural and economic factors of a country, as well as the differences in architecture, ecosystems and food,” Bland explained. “Educators travel with other teachers and students who are the grade level they teach. More importantly, the students on the delegation are students who are lifelong learners and who are excited about what they are going to do. It gives us teachers a pump. It gives us all an uplift we’re able to take back to the classroom.”

The journeys are educational and fun. “Participants are not just reading a book to better themselves, they are out there experiencing it for themselves,” Aden added. “The more seasoned teachers are always looking for ways to rejuvenate their teaching and to bring back to their classroom and their students a realism of what the world is really like.”

Teachers can visit the program’s Web site ([www.studentambassadors.org](http://www.studentambassadors.org)) to find out how to become a delegation leader or how to nominate exceptional students to accompany a delegation.



# CATS

# enhancement

## Teacher concerns addressed in nine are



Photo by Rick McComb

### A Way to Promote Student Accountability

and new, student-level instructional information.

As a measure for school accountability, CATS is the best in the biz. No other state, no other test, no other system measures school improvement better. Just ask *Education Week* — the national publication examines every state with a microscope, and it's given us an A grade every year for the past three years.

But, in addition to *school* accountability, we need **student accountability**. How many times have you heard that? Well, the Kentucky Board of Education and the Department of Education have heard it, too. And so the new test design will include **common items taken by all students** that can provide **new, student-level instructional information** and also could be used to promote **low-stakes student accountability at the school or district level**.

In the future, CATS won't just measure school performance. It will help teachers know each individual student better by providing new and useful feedback reports at the classroom and school level that can be used for diagnostic purposes. And local districts will be able to use results to **measure student performance** as they see fit. The test will be good not only for meeting our annual accountability requirements but also for improving daily instruction.

### A Clearer, More Focused Core Content

You'll know what's important — and what's *really* important.

The Kentucky Board of Education directed the state Department of Education to refine these key statements of what students should know and be able to do — to make our core content more focused, with clearer priorities and content specified by grade levels. **No guesswork!**

The Core Content for Assessment is now better aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), national content standards and the American Diploma Project.

### A Way to Hold the Line on Testing Time

with a premium on higher-order thinking skills.

With any comprehensive test, it's critical to include both multiple-choice and open-response items. In reviewing CATS, the board believes it's important to spend the **minimum amount of testing time** required to make sure the test remains **valid and reliable**.

That's why we'll use slightly more multiple-choice items designed to measure more than basic skills.



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## The Right Balance with Open Response

and a greater weight given to multiple-choice items.

As the number of open-response questions decreases and the number of multiple-choice questions increases, the board will adjust how these questions are weighted in the scoring to reflect that change.

What will the new balance be? The goal is to give approximately **equal weight** to both the open-response and the multiple-choice portions of the test. Remember, many of the multiple-choice items will have a higher level of difficulty to keep the emphasis on higher-order thinking.

## A Way to Follow Each Student’s Progress

and track individual growth in reading and math.

Because of its very thoroughness and versatility — and because it’s intended to measure schools, not students — CATS traditionally has lacked in one key area of educational assessment: **longitudinal measurements across the entire career of a student**. In order to measure student progress over the many years of a student’s career in reading and math, students in grades 3-8 will take yearly assessments in these two content areas beginning in spring 2007.

The outcomes of these **yearly assessments** will be **fantastic for math and reading teachers** to tweak their instruction across, say, a middle or high school curriculum, ensuring that **all students get the comprehensive learning they deserve**.

## A Creative Approach to Arts & Humanities, PL/VS

with pilots to assess what kids know and can do.

The state board understands the **value of Arts & Humanities and Practical Living/Vocational Studies** in the lives of our children and will **maintain the current weight of these assessments** in the overall accountability system. However, the board wants to know if there’s a better way to test these content areas to **address what students *do* as well as what they *know***.

Ideally, revisiting these assessments also will provide some time relief to schools and students in the bargain. Kentucky will maintain the current system as a transition while pilots are being evaluated.

## A Measure to Help Forecast College Success

and a way to guide specialized student work.

Another longtime item on the CATS wish list is a predictive measure of college success. **Are our students on track for success in college?** If not, what courses should they take to help them get on track? What areas should be **accelerated** or focused on **specialized work**?

Assessments aimed at measuring likely success in college can help not only students but also teachers, parents and schools **make sure that students are well prepared for success in college**.

## More Choice in Writing Prompts

and a focus on analytical writing in high school.

There will be **no increase in testing time** allotted to on-demand writing, but enough items to make sure the test remains valid and reliable. Students will complete one on-demand writing prompt and some multiple-choice items at fifth and eighth grades. At the 12th grade, students will complete two 60-minute on-demand writing prompts with one focusing on analysis and response to text. Students at all levels will have a choice of prompts.

## Help for Doing the Writing Portfolio Right

with fewer entries and guidelines for administration.

The new writing portfolio will have fewer student entries, a change from holistic to analytical scoring to provide more specific feedback to students and teacher, and alignment at the high school level with the expectations of higher education. The Department of Education will provide more specific professional development for teachers and new regulations and guidelines designed to reduce inappropriate portfolio practices.



# Elliott students learn science from ‘homemade’ wetland

By Joy Barr  
jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

Bringing students closer to nature and helping them appreciate the environment at “their own back door” are just two of the learning tools that Beverly McDavid uses to teach science at Elliott County High School. McDavid teaches seventh-graders at the 7-12 school and has discovered that hands-on outdoor learning has improved both the test scores of her students and their awareness of the environment.

McDavid incorporates the outdoors into her curriculum whenever possible to instill within her students a desire to learn more about the natural world around them. For her efforts to enhance the learning opportunities of her students, the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education recognized McDavid as the 2004 Environmental Educator of the Year. The award is given to people who excel in promoting education using the environment as a teaching tool.

“Mrs. McDavid continuously infuses her classes with hands-on lessons. Students are exposed to core content-laden activities daily, in such a way that they do not realize that they are attaining the goals she has set for them,” said Larry Salyer, principal at Elliott County High. “Her students are always actively engaged in learning.”

One of McDavid’s favorite units of study is water, in which she teaches about wetlands. Four years ago, she asked her students to draw a wetland and describe it for a homework assignment. She was amazed by some of the designs developed by the students. Their designs encouraged her to seek and get approval from the Elliott County Board of Education to construct a wetland on school property that incorporated the designs.

If teaching takes an enthusiastic, creative person to gain the respect of young people, McDavid is a role model. She didn’t let a lack of funds for the wetlands project stop her.

Once she decided to create a wetland, she and her students found money through grants and fundraisers to make the wetland a reality. In addition to a grant from the U.S. Forestry Service, McDavid’s students raised money for the wetland, which is now being used for school and community activities throughout the year.

She also put her students to work on the project at the small, rural school in north-eastern Kentucky. A parent volunteer used a bulldozer to dig the wetland, and students finished the job with shovels and other hand tools.

The wetland is designed to support a wide variety of hydrophytic vegetation. It is 24 inches deep, but will only freeze in extremely cold weather. The wetland has earthen shelves at various water depths to accommodate medium and deep-water plants. The wetland is completely natural and contains no pumps.

Shallow water is home to edge plants, provides drinking water for small mam-

mals and allows space for students to observe aquatic life.

The wood frog, American toad, as well as marbled and spotted salamanders in eastern Kentucky use wetlands extensively. Wetlands also can attract the endangered Virginia big-eared bat and Indiana bat.

McDavid says she sought out professional development opportunities to help gain further knowledge she could pass on to her students as part of the wetlands unit of study. She saw a volcano erupt in Costa Rica and walked through a rainforest as part of a professional development program.

The year after building the wetland, McDavid’s students researched wetland vegetation and found places to obtain native plants for the wetland. They also monitored the habitat and the diversity of its inhabitants.

They studied water quality, the importance of wetlands, biodiversity, and native flora and fauna by visiting at the site in person rather than through more traditional means of viewing pictures and films.

“Learning about science should be fun,” said McDavid. Her students prove her point as enthusiastic supporters who help maintain the outdoor classroom. They periodically thin and weed plants and remove fall leaves and debris to keep the wetland well maintained. Last spring, students sowed rye grass and clover and removed an overpopulation of cattails from the wetland.

Also last year, students constructed a walking trail around the wetland, which is at the edge of a wooded area with diverse vegetation. The students identified and marked plants, wildflowers and trees so the public and all Elliott County teachers and students can use the trail for environmental studies.

McDavid incorporates local heritage in her science classes. Each year, students tap maple trees on school property and catch enough sap to make maple syrup for a pancake breakfast. Students collect maple sap from early February through late March, collecting up to a half gallon on a warm day. However, it takes several gallons of sap to make a small amount of maple syrup, McDavid pointed out.

After enough of the clear, liquid sap is boiled and made into syrup, students enjoy a treat of pancakes topped with the rewards of their work. As part of the science lesson, students also learn about local customs, measurements, nutrition and the process for making maple syrup.

McDavid’s students also maintain six bluebird-nesting boxes at the school. The bluebird box nearest her classroom has a video camera inside so students can see the birds come and go, as well as feed and nest. Simple feeding stations outside the building provide experiences where students can practice observation, inquiry-based investigations and data collection.

McDavid’s science curriculum is aligned with state and national education stan-



Beverly McDavid, 2004 Kentucky Environmental Educator of the Year, points out to her students various plant species found along the trail in the outdoor classroom she and students helped build on the campus of their Elliott County school.

dards. “I like to provide concrete hands-on experiences that show science concepts are connected to real-life,” said McDavid.

Gwenda Adkins, the extension agent for family and consumer sciences in Elliott County, recommended McDavid for the environmental education award. Adkins is one of several community leaders who assist in the environmental education programs at Elliott County High School.

“I have never worked with a more creative and energetic teacher,” said Adkins. “Beverly McDavid has taken the natural beauty from this area and with her students has made a tremendous outdoor

classroom to share with the school and community.”

McDavid has developed curriculum on Kentucky forests that is posted on the All Wild About Kentucky’s Environment (AWAKE) Web site at [www.kentuckyawake.org](http://www.kentuckyawake.org) for all educators to use. She also has developed units of study to help students explore and learn through inquiry about science and social studies while using existing resources and Kentucky forests as a classroom.

Contact: Beverly McDavid, Elliott County High School, (606) 738-8052, [bmcdavid@elliott.k12.ky.us](mailto:bmcdavid@elliott.k12.ky.us)

## ParentInfo newsletter written for parents and teachers

Teachers and parents of school-age children can receive helpful information related to education and child development from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Twice a month, the department sends out a free, electronic newsletter called “ParentInfo” that includes brief features on testing, school based decision making councils, school report cards, technology and more. The newsletter also includes helpful Web resources.

Teachers and parents can register to receive “ParentInfo” by going to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) and entering “parentinfo” in the keyword/search box. Then click “Search” to access the subscription page for “ParentInfo.”



# HIGHLY

from Page 1



Photo by Rick McComb

**Ruth Montgomery, from Breckinridge County, talks with other Highly Skilled Educators during an end-of-the-year meeting to exchange ideas and discuss challenges that members of the cadre face in helping assistance-level schools improve.**

an innovative approach to school-level reform, is producing impressive results (see chart on this page) and gaining attention from other states.

Other states are using Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educators program as a model. A former program participant has created a school assistance program in Tennessee that uses components of Kentucky's program.

Louisiana also has modeled its school assistance program after Kentucky's. However, implementation of a complete program in that state has been limited by budget constraints.

#### Only the best

Candidates for the Highly Skilled Educators program go through a rigorous selection process. Teachers and admin-

istrators who apply must hold Kentucky certification and a master's degree in an education-related field. They must have a minimum of five years as an educator, although 10 years' experience is preferred.

Candidates are screened during interviews with a panel of evaluators. They must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of Kentucky education documents on a written assessment as well as during group and individual performance events.

Each candidate must submit a video of his or her classroom instruction. Members of the selection committee also visit each finalist's work site to observe the applicant at work and to interview colleagues, supervisors and students.

Only about 12 percent of the candidates

who apply for the program are tapped to become Highly Skilled Educators. Once in the program, they can serve for as many as three years. To provide continuity, about one-third of the Highly Skilled Educators cadre is replaced each year.

#### Demands of the job

When people find out that Highly Skilled Educators can be paid as much as \$90,000 a year, many say, "I want a job like that." However, many educators in the assistance-level schools feel the Highly Skilled Educators earn every penny of their pay.

They put in long hours — nights and some weekends — to help their schools achieve. While every effort is made to place Highly Skilled Educators close to their home school districts, several must live away from their families for extended periods of time or travel long distances daily to and from their schools.

Highly Skilled Educators must prepare to model lessons for teachers, work with administrators on school improvement standards, find resources to help individual content problems, lead change among the adults in their schools and provide support for overwhelmed faculties. In addition, they are expected to participate in summer cadre training, support other Highly Skilled Educators, work in regional cadre teams and participate in weekly online live chat sessions via the Kentucky Virtual High School.

Despite the long hours, travel and hard work, Highly Skilled Educators have proof that the program is working. Change is occurring in schools that have participated in the school assistance program. Teach-

ers know their instruction is improving, and as a result, students are achieving at higher levels.

Highly Skilled Educators make personal sacrifices to help students in Kentucky's lowest-performing schools achieve at high levels. The time spent in the program by Highly Skilled Educators also is reaping benefits for Kentucky districts.

The Highly Skilled Educators program is proving to be a training ground for school leadership in Kentucky. Eight of the state's 176 superintendents are former Highly Skilled Educators. Many more have become principals or returned to their districts as district and building-level instructional leaders.

For 11 years, the Highly Skilled Educators Program has been gaining respect in Kentucky. "I wish every state could see how much a program like the Highly Skilled Educators enhances the educational process, and (that they) would adopt similar programs at every school in all districts across the country," said Penni Flinn, a primary teacher who worked with two Highly Skilled Educators at Stonestreet Elementary in Jefferson County. "Every student should have the advantage of attending a school with a Highly Skilled Educator on campus!"

To find out how to become a 2006-2007 candidate for the Highly Skilled Educators program, go to [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov), select "KDE QuickLinks" and click on "Highly Skilled Educators."

## What educators are saying about the program

By **Faun S. Fishback**

[ffishbac@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:ffishbac@kde.state.ky.us)

Entering its 11th year of assisting Kentucky's lowest-performing schools, the Highly Skilled Educators program has a proven track record of success. The program is helping students, teachers and administrators, and developing future leaders for education in Kentucky.

Eighty percent of the teachers surveyed about their experiences with the program say their teaching has improved as a result of the help they received from the Highly Skilled Educator in their schools. Eighty-one percent say curriculum units and lesson plans have improved, and 85 percent say they are more focused in teaching key concepts and skills to students.

Similarly, administrators attribute improvement in their leadership skills to working with a Highly Skilled Educator in their schools. They say the presence of the Highly Skilled Educator improved morale in their schools and helped the faculty and staff become more focused on improving student achievement.

Kentucky's test results also show that students are learning more in schools served by Highly Skilled Educators. With

the exception of two schools, every Level 3 school served by a Highly Skilled Educator has moved out of assistance during the past 10 years.

The Highly Skilled Educators program also has firmly established itself as a training ground for a new generation of leaders for Kentucky schools. Ninety percent of all Highly Skilled Educators move on to a higher-level position after leaving the program.

For example, Kentucky has eight current superintendents who at one time were Highly Skilled Educators. At least 24 Highly Skilled Educators who entered the program as teachers became principals after leaving the program. Four have become assistant superintendents in districts, and more than 50 have accepted district-level positions upon leaving the program.

Here is what Kentucky educators are saying about the Highly Skilled Educators who serve and the program:

"What we have found is that when a school embraces the help, it translates out into higher student achievement in all cases. What a great opportunity to have an extra set of hands with outstanding expertise provided for us! . . . From a bang

for the buck perspective, we're seeing results." — Stu Silberman, superintendent of Fayette County Schools

"In a very short time, I feel that we have connected as educators and are dedicated to the success for all students. (Our Highly Skilled Educator) has been extremely instrumental in changing the climate of a school in decline. . . Having someone to go to for advice, professional development support and leadership has proved to be the answer for struggling schools as evidenced by our own improvement." — Ewing Elementary (Fleming County) primary teacher Susan Ramey

"Our HSE came in and turned our focus and attitudes around. She has guided this staff to improve our teaching skills and use active learning in a more effective way. She offered suggestions on how to captivate all learners and keep them engaged. She modeled lessons, mentored, offered PD and, basically, went out of her way to change the school environment. We could not have accomplished so much in such a short period of time without her." — Toni Spain, special education teacher at Pembroke Elementary (Christian County)

See **WHAT** on Page 10

### Successes in the Highly Skilled Educators Program

#### 1994 – 1996

50 Distinguished Educators  
53 schools served

- 53 schools improved Academic Index
- 34 schools exceeded goal

#### 1996 – 1998

49 Distinguished Educators  
178 schools served

- 167 schools improved Academic Index
- 85 schools exceeded goal

#### 1998 – 2000

63 Highly Skilled Educators  
66 schools served

- 65 schools improved Academic Index
- All Level 3 schools moved out of Level 3 classification by meeting or exceeding goal

#### 2000 – 2002

54 Highly Skilled Educators  
53 schools and two districts served

- 46 improved Academic Index
- All Level 3 schools moved out of Level 3 classification by meeting or exceeding goal

#### 2002 – 2004

55 Highly Skilled Educators  
84 schools and four districts served

- 80 schools improved Academic Index
- All but two Level 3 schools moved out of Level 3 classification by meeting or exceeding goal



# STUDENTS

from Page 1

(CATS) tests were more like the SAT or ACT. Students said it would promote a higher level of learning and familiarize them with an important test format.

- Student incentives, such as KEES money for high-scoring students, would encourage students to do well on the CATS tests.
- Because finding guidance counselors is becoming an increasingly difficult task, schools should utilize numerous advisors who will be able to devote time and attention to students.
- Teachers also should familiarize themselves with the complexities of college applications, etc. This would allow them to be even more valuable resources to their students.
- Students need more options in terms of college credits and foreign language courses.
- Students support block schedules where a school measures performance against standards, awarding credit for performance, not seat-time.
- Students say classes in high demand should be offered in more than one block. Independent studies should be considered.
- Kentucky must ensure that each school offers a breadth of elective options that include in-depth courses. These courses should expand on ideas in both the related arts and core content curricula.
- Individual Learning Plans, a Web-enabled version of the Individual Graduation Plan, should be implemented as an effective tool for students and counselors to ensure that every student receives a personalized education that is best suited to individual needs.
- The plans should be the result of collaboration between a student and his or her advisor.
- Every high school should implement a

system of core requirements that will ensure the mastery of important subjects by all Kentucky students.

- Kentucky needs teachers and administrators who will be devoted to providing students with the best high school experience.
- Deliberate and effective transitions must be created between middle and high schools throughout Kentucky.
- Middle and high school curricula must be carefully compared to ensure that the freshman year continues middle school concepts.
- It is important for schools to foster connections between middle and high school students. Mentor programs can cultivate meaningful relationships between students of different ages.
- The common school identity generates support for the entire campus throughout the community. This community support creates an environment in which students feel valued and, therefore, desire to stay in school.

After hearing the student presentation, the board expressed interest in focusing more on relationships of students and teachers, providing schools with options, working with the Education Professional Standards Board to better prepare teachers to teach in a changing environment and specifying the role of an expanded Individual Graduation Plan in a changed school environment.

The board expressed a sense of urgency for the high school refocusing work and asked department staff to revise its work plan in order to revisit the issue at the August meeting.

### Nutrition in schools

Minimum nutrition standards for foods and beverages available on public school campuses during the school day generated much discussion. In response to Senate

Bill 172, passed during the 2005 General Assembly, the board began the process that will make changes in the foods and beverages sold at public schools.

The bill requires the board to issue an administrative regulation that specifies minimum nutritional standards for all foods and beverages that are sold outside the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs. This includes items in vending machines, school stores, canteens and à la carte cafeteria sales.

The bill also requires the regulation to address serving size, and sugar and fat content of the foods and beverages.

Constituent groups raised several issues at the meeting including whether the statute directs the board to develop requirements that apply only to elementary schools or to all schools. The board's Management Committee determined it applies to all schools.

Other issues included: the need for more input from constituent groups on decisions about school nutrition programs, the amount of reporting required by districts, the portion size limit, foods and beverages being used as rewards for classroom behavior and whether the regulation needs to address à la carte items on the cafeteria line.

The board directed department staff to pursue further changes to the regulation by: having face-to-face meetings with constituent groups, allowing local flexibility for handling issues not specified by the statute, supporting recommendations that come to the board through data, and addressing only foods and beverages outside the federal programs.

The board will continue discussion of the regulation and review proposed amendments. Final approval of the regulation may occur at the August meeting.

### Changes to CATS

The state board agreed to accept revisions to CATS that will apply to the 2006-2007 school year. These changes will be reflected in the Request for Proposals (RFP) that will be used to determine the state's next testing contractor. The RFP is expected to be issued by August so the board can choose a vendor by January 2006.

The revisions include changes to portfolios, working toward a plan to track student progress and moving some tests to different grades for accountability purposes. For detailed information about these enhancements, see Pages 6 and 7 of this issue.

The board also agreed to accept revisions to assessment regulations. The revisions align deadlines to coincide with earlier release of scores to schools and the public, and to incorporate federal flexibility in complying with No Child Left Behind Act requirements.

### 2005-2006 priorities

Every summer the board identifies priorities that will be the focus of the Kentucky Department of Education's work for the coming school year. The 2005-2006 board priorities are: refocusing secondary education, leadership, early childhood education, reading/literacy and achievement gap issues.

These priorities will serve as a guide to direct the department and education leaders as improvements are made on existing programs and policies and as new initiatives are crafted.

The next meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be Aug. 3 and 4 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click.

## KY educator helps students in Iraq school

According to a *Courier-Journal* news story, Highly Skilled Educator is a title 2nd Lt. Travis Huber wears even though his new day job is keeping peace in southern Iraq. While providing safe passage for military convoys in Iraq, his platoon discovered a bombed-out school where teachers are holding classes for 250 students.

The former assistant principal at Mason County Middle School e-mailed education colleagues and friends last May asking for school and first aid supplies for "this Level 3 — maybe Level 4 — school."

They responded. His wife, Brenda, a teacher at Straub Elementary School (Mason County), coordinates shipments to Huber's unit. Even miles away from his job in Kentucky's education system, Huber is working to help raise the achievement of all children!

# WHAT

from Page 9

"(It has) helped us to develop better teaching strategies, become more aware of the importance of assessing student work and teacher effectiveness...and bring out the best in all staff, students and myself." — Richard DeAngelis, principal at Ewing Elementary School (Fleming County)

"When I heard we were getting a HSE, I was really worried. I thought they would come in and crack the whip and tell us everything we were doing wrong. I couldn't have been more off track. Our HSEs have been the best thing to ever happen to this school. They have been such a huge resource. Our HSEs gently guide us to always focus back on what's best for children." — Phyllis Bailey, sixth-grade mathematics teacher, Inez Middle School (Martin County)

"My impression of the program overall is positive, based on very limited exposure in my own district but observing what is happening across the state. For schools

and districts that have a strong desire to improve, I believe they must build that capacity from within. An HSE can be a catalyst for a school district to begin the

work of building the capacity for continuous improvement within the faculty and staff of that district." — Roger Marcum, superintendent of Marion County Schools



Highly Skilled Educator Ruth Sorace, who is assigned to Jefferson County Schools, and Earl Lynn Huddleston, Jefferson County science resource teacher, practice their observation skills during the Inquiry Summit in July.



# Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr  
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## School districts meet needs of families

Twenty-one Kentucky school districts are among 2,528 public school districts in the U.S. to receive the 2005 What Parents Want Award from SchoolMatch, an independent, nationwide service that helps relocating families find schools that meet the needs of their children. According to SchoolMatch, parents most often look for school systems that are: competitive in academic test scores and academically solid, accredited, recognized for excellence, competitive in teacher salaries, above average in expenditures for instructional resources and library/media services, and known for small class size.

Kentucky school districts recognized for providing “what parents want” are Beechwood Independent, Boone County, Daviess County, Elizabethtown Independent, Erlanger-Elsmere Independent, Fayette County, Fort Thomas Independent, Frankfort Independent, Franklin County, Hardin County, Jefferson County, Jessamine County, Kenton County, Madison County, McCracken County, Murray Independent, Oldham County, Pikeville Independent, Russell Independent, Warren County and Woodford County.

## State board presents Robinson Award

The Kentucky Board of Education presented the Dr. Samuel Robinson Award to Robert Smotherman, the recently retired superintendent of the Bardstown Independent school district. Under his leadership, the district joined with five other school districts in Kentucky’s Minority Student Achievement Partnership, working to identify ways to reduce the achievement gap between minority and white students. The school district became the first in the state to create a private educational foundation to raise money for its schools. It also was the first district to offer pre-school to all 4-year-olds, regardless of economic or special education status.

The state board established the award to honor retired board member Samuel Robinson and to celebrate the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision. The annual award is conferred on an individual or organization in Kentucky demonstrating outstanding commitment, service and leadership in promoting opportunities for all Kentucky students at high levels.

## School Social Work conference in Lexington

The Kentucky Association for School Social Work will hold its 2005 conference on Sept. 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Spindletop Hall in Lexington. Elizabeth Croney and Andrea Megan Thomas will

lead the morning session on “Bipolar Disorder in Children and Adolescents.” An afternoon panel will discuss the school social work profession.

Contact: Tina Johnson, president, at teenamj@aol.com  
[www.kassw-ky.org](http://www.kassw-ky.org)

## Year-round education conference in September

The Kentucky Association for Year-Round Education will hold its fifth annual statewide conference Sept. 18-19 at Eminence High School in Eminence. Sessions are designed to meet the curriculum needs of participants who may be considering the transition to an alternative school calendar.

[www.eminence.k12.ky.us/KAYRE.html](http://www.eminence.k12.ky.us/KAYRE.html)

## State graduation rate increases slightly

The Kentucky Department of Education has released 2003-2004 nonacademic data for public schools. This data reflects results from attendance, retention, drop-out, graduation and successful transition to adult life, which comprise the nonacademic component of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

Data show that Kentucky’s graduation rate among high school seniors increased by two points since the 2002-2003 school year — from 79.15 percent to 81.29 percent.

The high school dropout rate was virtually unchanged, moving from 3.34 percent in 2003 to 3.35 in 2004. In grades 9-12, 62 more students dropped out in 2004 than in 2003. The highest dropout rates are found in the 11th grade, with 3.89 percent of students dropping out.

The school retention rate — the percentage of students held back a grade — decreased slightly, as did the school attendance and percentage of students making a successful transition to adult life rates. The non-academic data reports from 1999 to 2004 can be accessed on the Kentucky Department of Education Web site at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on “KDE QuickLinks” in the upper right-hand corner, select “Non-academic Data” from the list and click.

## Prichard Committee focuses on high school improvement

Too many Kentucky high schools are failing to adequately prepare students for life after graduation, and there is an urgent need to change those schools to help students meet the educational and workplace demands of the 21st century.

That is the conclusion of “High Achieving High Schools,” a report prepared by a task force of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. “Too many stu-



Photo by Rick McComb

## Superintendent training film

Fred Simpson, director of superintendent training and testing for the Kentucky Department of Education, left, moderates a discussion among Fayette County Superintendent Stu Silberman, Nelson County Superintendent Jan Lantz and McCracken County Superintendent Tim Heller during taping of a training video for all first-year superintendents. New superintendents received copies of this discussion and a second involving three other Kentucky superintendents as part of the state training program.

dents are failing to graduate. Too many others are getting by in high school, but they aren’t learning enough to succeed in college courses without remedial help or at workplace assignments without additional training,” noted the report.

The task force emphasized that the problem is rooted more in the design of today’s high schools than in the actual performance of most schools.

Another obstacle to improving high schools is the general lack of public awareness of how critical the program is, according to the report. Hard academic work and high achievement are required of all students for success after high school, in both postsecondary education and employment. However, many schools, students, parents, communities and policymakers fail to understand that modern reality, the report said.

The senior year is particularly troublesome, often becoming a time when students fall behind because — having accumulated the credits they need for

graduation — they choose easy electives, outside activities and paid employment instead of challenging academic work, the report noted.

“It is time to bring public high schools into the 21st century,” the report concludes. “The work will be hard, but vitally important.”

The task force made a series of recommendations to start moving Kentucky’s high schools toward high achievement. To download the entire report, visit [www.prichardcommittee.org](http://www.prichardcommittee.org).

## Instruction and assessment workshop

The Kentucky Association for Assessment Coordinators will hold the Scott Trimble Workshop on Instruction and Assessment Oct. 24-25 at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville. The theme for the workshop is “Measuring Success — Every Student Counts.” Register by Oct. 11.

[www.kaac.org](http://www.kaac.org)



# Are you ready for any emergency?

By Cathy Lindsey

clindsey@kde.state.ky.us

As a teacher, you understand that the futures of your students are in your hands. You are responsible for what students learn in your classroom and what knowledge they take with them to use in the future.

But you also may literally have their lives in your hands. Are you prepared to take charge if one of your students faces a life-or-death situation in your classroom?

That possibility became a reality for Oldham County physical education teacher Matt Watkins when a student's breathing and pulse stopped during a science experiment on electrical current.

"It was one of those experiences that you train for, but you hope you'll never have to use," said Watkins, a member of his school's crisis-response team.

The student had volunteered for an experiment with a generator, which had been used many times by students without any problems. Two electrodes were placed on the student's chest. The generator's crank was turned, and the student fell to the ground.

The science teacher sent students to the office for help. That's where Watkins happened to be.

Fortunately for the student, both Watkins and another teacher, Marti Newcomb-Thompson, were certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and arrived on the scene quickly. Watkins started chest compressions while Newcomb-Thompson performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Paramedics arrived within minutes of the school's emergency call. They shocked the student's heart with a defibrillator. This produced a faint pulse until they could transport him to a hospital where he made a full recovery. He was back at school the next week.

This incident at South Oldham High School in May 2003 led the district to place automated external defibrillators (AED) in each high school in the Oldham County school district.

Watkins' experience is not an

isolated case. Health emergencies in schools across the state have prompted school districts to purchase portable defibrillators and train staff to use them.

"Schools can never have enough emergency training or equipment," said Jon Akers, director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety. "We always want to be prepared for all situations."

Akers said state regulations require schools to have at least one person on staff who is trained and certified in first aid and CPR.

"That's good, unless..." said Paula Rutledge, executive direc-

training more than ever and is thankful that he was prepared and able to use that training to save a life. He hopes other teachers will learn from his experience and get certified first aid training.

Watkins said he has peace of mind that his school has a portable defibrillator and that he knows how to use it. "Untrained teachers can't respond except to call for help," he said. "That must be such a helpless feeling."

To learn more about CPR and defibrillation training in your area, contact your local Red Cross chapter at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org). To learn more about imple-



Franklin County Red Cross Director Paula Rutledge demonstrates on Peaks Mill Elementary primary student Matt Thompson how a defibrillator is used on children.

tor of the Franklin County Red Cross. "What if an emergency occurs when that one person is on vacation or even worse, what if that one person is the victim?"

Red Cross chapters across the state offer training in health and safety classes such as CPR, AED and standard first aid. There is a fee for the training.

"Unfortunately, we've had fewer and fewer teachers take our training over the last five years," Rutledge said. The decrease may be budget related, she added.

Now a teacher at Oldham County High School, Watkins encourages all teachers to consider getting emergency medical training. He said knowing that others in the school also are trained builds confidence.

"Working in a team situation is much more calming in an emergency," he said. "The more staff that are certified, the more quickly we can respond."

Watkins said he values his



Photo by Rick McComb



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